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# THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LATER ANṢĀRĪ POETRY—I

By W. 'ARAFAT

Of the poems of boasting ascribed to Ḥassān b. Thābit, 16 are found on investigation to be by later Anṣārīs and reflect the inferior status to which the Anṣār in general were reduced after the battle of al-Ḥarra and the sack of Madīna in the year A.H. 63, as well as, occasionally, the tribal rivalries which prevailed during the Umayyad period.

Of these poems some may be only partly of doubtful authenticity. A number indicate that the poet is boasting of a heritage. In some, events are listed just as history. In certain cases explicit indications are found in the lines of the poet's awareness that he is boasting of his 'ancestors' who were the first Muslims. In some the boasting is in very general terms and full of platitudes. Some of the poems are ascribed to others, and some contain unmistakable interpolations.

Because of their late authorship, and because they share many common characteristics, it is difficult to group them satisfactorily for the purpose of detailed examination. As some of them contain, however, explicit indication of late authorship, these will be examined together, whereas similar poems without this 'explicit indication' will be dealt with later.

One poem, no. CLII,<sup>1</sup> stands alone because, unlike the rest of the poems, the boasting in it is concentrated on the poet's own person.

The first group will, therefore, be nos. VI, IX, XVII, CLXI, and two poems in the *Sīra*,<sup>2</sup> p. 474 and p. 929. Nos. VII, X, LXXIX, and XIX come next, and will be considered in part II of this article (*BSOAS*, XXIX, 2, 1966). Reference will be made to nos. V, CXII, CXIX, and CLIX.

No. VI, of 41 lines, is one of the longest poems attributed to Ḥassān. The poet begins by addressing his beloved one or his wife:

لَكَ الْخَيْرُ، غُضِّي اللَّوْمَ عَنِّي فَإِنِّي أَحَبُّ مِنَ الْأَخْلَاقِ مَا كَانَ أَجْمَلًا

'Mayest thou have what is good! abate thy blame of me, for I like finer qualities'.

The next four lines are personal boasting in the first person singular. First he adjures her not to object to his qualities and character (ll. 2-3), and continues to assert that he thinks stinginess a disgrace, and that he dislikes the inconstant and the hypocrites (l. 4); once he takes a dislike to anything, he never turns back to it (l. 5).

Following a hackneyed method of transition, he proceeds to describe his camel in traditional terms and with no attempt at originality (ll. 6-10).

<sup>1</sup> In Hirschfeld's edition of the *Diwān* of Ḥassān b. Thābit (Gibb Memorial Series, XIII), Leyden and London, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1859.

Quite arbitrary, however, is the manner in which he begins the next section, which is boasting of himself and his tribe, in the first person plural.

'We are a people who do not choose as chief anyone who is treacherous or who withdraws at the moment when there is responsibility to be borne, (l. 11) or one who withholds wealth or a coward in war (l. 12). We choose as chief a grey-haired, dignified person (l. 13), one who in the assembly shows generosity, achieves glory, and is found stronger than anyone who tries to stand up to him (l. 15).'

Line 17 continues the description of the 'patriarch' they would accept as chief. The line means in effect, that the chief has insight in his wise firmness and in his deeds.

Line 18 is very significant :

وما ذاك إلا أننا جعلت لنا أكابرنا في أول الخير أولا

'And that is only because our "elders" were pioneers for us at the very beginning of goodness'.

From this line it is clear at a glance that the poet is confessing to an inferior status in regard to those *akābir* as well as to a certain gap of time that separates him from them—a position which would be neither true of Ḥassān nor acceptable to him. The word *akābir* itself might very well be intended to mean the (past) 'generation of Elders'. The word *al-khair* always smacks of a quasi-religious sense of 'goodness' or 'good deeds'. The words *awwal al-khair* and *awwala* could hardly mean anything but 'pioneers' or perhaps 'precedents' in the beginning of the 'era of goodness'.

The next two lines, 19 and 20, contain such platitudinous exaggerations as could not possibly emanate from Ḥassān: 'We are the "summit" of the children of Adam' (l. 19); 'Glory built a mansion over us, firmly founded, which men could not move'.

Line 21 clearly indicates the time when they had come to be known finally and definitely as 'al-Anṣār' and when the name had become not only their proper name instead of the Aus and Khazraj, but also the main basis and chief source of their pride. Indeed in this poem, apart from generalities, the fact that they are the 'Anṣār' is the sole basis of boasting. Thus in l. 21, we read 'And thou wilt never find among men a tribe better or of greater glory than the "Anṣār"'.

Then follows a list of the 'types' of men who abound among the Anṣār (ll. 22-7): many a generous lord, an auspicious grey-haired man, a hopeful child, a beardless youth of ready service, a matchless speaker, a clever poet who 'sifts' his poetry, a kingly hero who swiftly responds to the call of death, a proud one who has a trail behind him, open-handed and 'much-blamed' for his generosity.

Then follows a return to the first person plural to begin a section of the poem boasting of Madīna itself, though it is not mentioned by name: 'We have a land (*harrah*) of our own, surrounded by its own mountains. In it glory built

its own mansion (l. 28). In it are palm trees and fortresses with streams running between them (l. 29) '.

Lines 30–2 explain the method of drawing more water when one of the streams runs dry. Line 33 tells us that in its various parts horses and well-cared for camels are found.

This section clearly indicates that al-Madīna was no longer the centre of events, nor indeed a place of particular importance. The fact that the poet finds himself compelled to resort to this kind of boasting, based on 'having good land of their own', shows the political bankruptcy of the Anṣār. The almost casual way the poet refers to it, not even mentioning Madīna by name, the attempt to draw attention, as it were, to its mere existence, the way he dwelt on the material and worldly qualities of it point only to a time when Madīna had long been reduced to a mere provincial town of hardly any importance.

The poet goes on to some reminiscences of past history: 'We protected it by our swords and lances against the army and the Beduins' (l. 34), which is a significant way of referring to the siege of Madīna in the year A.H. 5 and those who took part in it; 'Whenever they gathered a host we rose up to them' (l. 35); 'In it (Madīna) we supported the best of all mankind as Imām, and revered the revealed Book' (l. 36); 'We supported [him] and gave shelter [to him], and the blows we struck with the sword on his behalf straightened the deviation of those who deviated' (l. 37).

These brief references to the siege of Madīna and to the support the Prophet received are all there is in this poem connected with that vital period in the history of Islam. By the time this poem was written, all that had clearly become past history and memories of a glorious page which the first Anṣār had written, but which had now been turned and their descendants were merely aware of its existence. They refer to it as part of their past heritage of glory, then dwell on their own present, what riches they possess, and what empty boasts they can make in general platitudes.

The 'defensive' strain which runs through the whole poem comes out most clearly in l. 38, where the poet seems almost in a supine position under a continuous shower of insults directed against the Anṣār in general. 'Thou wilt find none who treats us harshly or abuses us except a base person who has gone astray' (l. 38) or else one who had 'suffered from the edge of our swords' (l. 39).

One can only imagine the attitude of Ḥassān in a similar situation. He would indeed have replied to the least harshness or insult with such effective slander as would more than make up for a physical revenge. But Ḥassān lived in a different age and in different circumstances.

The last two lines, 40–1, are the last fling of boasting based on their hospitality, their ability to give protection to whosoever may seek it, and their generosity.

Thus this poem on the whole represents a much weaker spirit and shows a defensive, almost passive attitude. It has certain pompous phrases, such as 'We are the summit of the sons of Adam', which have a ridiculously empty

ring. It is very revealing, for it shows that the poet feels in the depths of his heart that the only really solid ground for boasting that he had was the rich land of the Madīna which he could plant. All else had melted into thin air. Even the references to the support they gave to the Prophet are hurried.

In general, while the poem as verse, is not as inferior as many others attributed to Ḥassān, it lacks the power of Ḥassān's verse. The lines have not the terseness, the tightness and firm strength of Ḥassān's lines. The weakness comes out sometimes in certain repetitions such as the word نَاكِلًا at the beginning of the second half of each of ll. 11 and 12, and وَإِنْ كَانَ in ll. 15 and 16. It is also clear in the obscurity of l. 15. A certain amount of padding and artificially-placed rhyme-words can also be found, though in a much lesser degree than in other poems, especially those dealing with subjects other than boasting. The best part of the poem is the traditional introduction including the description of the camel, where the traditional ideas are couched in good verse. There is, however, no point in lifting the doubt from this section on this account. It is safe enough to say that this poem is the work of a member of the Madinese tribes, who might have been originally from either the Aus or the Khazraj, and who lived in the Umayyad period, later, perhaps than the days of Yazīd I.

No. ix must be the work of later Anṣāris than Ḥassān.<sup>3</sup> The very first line rings a note which seems to carry one some way back across the expanse of time :

أُولَئِكَ قَوْمِي فَإِنْ تَسْأَلِي      كَرَامٌ إِذَا الضَّيْفُ يَوْمًا أَلَمٌ

'Those are my people, if thou askest, hospitable if a guest arrives one day'. One suspects that *qawmi* really means 'the people to whom I belong', 'my ancestors', and that the translation should really be 'those were my ancestors', or 'that was my tribe'. The poet's individuality then merges into the historical personality of the tribe. Lines 2 and 3 praise their hospitality and their generosity.

From l. 4 to l. 31, three lines before the end, the poem deals with the 'history' of those 'people', the Madinese. This part of the poem is clearly divided into two sections; one deals with the 'history' of the time before the immigration of the Prophet, and the other with the Prophet's immigration and the support he received.

At the end of the historical part we find explicit and irrefutable proof of later date, for in l. 32 the poet seems to shout, 'So that is our heritage from [past] generations, ancient glory and outstanding greatness', and in l. 33 'When one generation goes its descendants prove sufficient in themselves and leave [another] generation when they pass away'. 'Thus there are none among

<sup>3</sup> Hirschfeld adds the note that this poem is 'ascribed to the poet's son, 'Abd al-Raḥmān', but there is no manuscript authority for this note. It probably arose from a comment by Ibn Hishām which concerned a poem on p. 929 of the *Sīra* (to be discussed below) but which Hirschfeld may have interpreted as covering the two poems which follow immediately after it. One of these is the poem now under consideration.

men but that they are indebted to us for abundance of grace, though they may act treacherously' (l. 34).

The first part of the historical section deals methodically with the legendary history of pre-Hijra Madīna, adorned and embellished to suit the purpose and the poetic narration: 'they were "kings" in their land (l. 4), kings over men, never subjected even for a short time (l. 5), they told the story of 'Ād, Thamūd, and "certain remnants of Iram" (l. 6), (these) had built among the palm trees in Yathrib fortresses and acquired cattle (l. 7) which drew water from the walls and which were taught certain calls by the Jews (l. 8), [they were living] a carefree life with as much wine as they desired (l. 9). Then they (the ancestors of the poet) marched upon them (ll. 10–12) surprised them (l. 13), and they were scattered in alarm (l. 14)'.

From the second half of l. 14 onwards, the poet turns to the first person plural, evidently identifying himself with his victorious ancestors. From then until l. 19 they and their horses are described. Lines 19 and 20 describe the final result of that phase of history: 'We returned with their chief men and their women forcibly [led], and with their wealth for distribution (l. 19). We inherited their dwellings after them and were kings in them, never to leave (l. 20)'.

The 'Islamic phase' of this historical narration now begins: 'Then when the Messenger of "the King" came to us with truth and light after darkness (l. 21), we put our trust in him and did not disobey him when he came to us from the land of the "Ḥaram" (l. 22)'.

The lines that follow (23–7) are in the form of an address to the Prophet, put in the mouth of his Madinese hosts: 'We said, "thou hast said the truth, O Messenger of 'the King', come unto us, and among us stay"' (l. 23); 'For we testify that thou art the servant of "the King", sent, as a light, with an upright faith' (l. 25).

Line 25 is an exhortation for the Prophet openly to declare the hitherto secret mission, l. 26 a promise that they and their children would protect him, and an offer of their wealth, l. 27 is more or less a repetition of the exhortation in l. 25.

The result is in ll. 28–31: 'The unbelievers and their followers hurried to him thinking he could be killed but we rose up to them with our swords . . .'. 'That is the heritage that (past) generations left for us . . .' (l. 32).

Other poems will be found where 'history' is narrated, or where the events of the early Islamic era are listed with something like detachment. Only later generations could look at events in this simplified 'textbook' manner. The presence in a poem of this method of presenting events is a clear indication of later authorship, probably late in the Umayyad period. Though not all such poems contain, in addition, explicit evidence of later date, the presence of such evidence in the poem just discussed and a number of others should enforce the argument for late authorship where the sole evidence is this method of parading past history.

This poem shares with the previous one, no. VI, the emphasis laid on the qualities of Madīna as a rich town. It also shares that definite inferiority to Ḥassān's more powerful verse.

Line 25, which is an exhortation to the Prophet put in the mouth of the Anṣār, to spread his mission openly, is contrary to the accepted historical facts. For the Prophet had actually come out openly before his immigration. Such an exhortation, therefore, for him to come out openly with 'what thou hast kept secret' could only arise from a distortion of facts by lapse of time.

The next poem, no. XVII, is a very good example of a reply by a member of a later generation of the Anṣār to attacks from members of other tribes, some of whom had suffered defeat when the Madinese formed the main part of the Prophet's army, and whose descendants were now finding their chance to retaliate.

The first five lines of the poem are a traditional introduction of mixed description of the traces of the camp and the beloved one. The fifth line is interesting only because an identical line except for the rhyme-word is ascribed in the notes to the Ausite poet Qais Ibn al-Khaṭīm.<sup>4</sup>

The polemical part of the poem begins at l. 6. That the poem is a reply to a definite attack by a certain person is clear, not only from the persistent use of the imperative, and the second person but from such dramatic interjections as *وَبِحَكَ* in l. 8, and from the vehement and quick succession, without conjunctions, of verbs in the imperative exhorting the person concerned to inquire, etc. . . .

Addressing the person who is 'trying to attain our glory' the poet orders him, with a curse, to make inquiries (l. 6), for, the poet argues (l. 7), are they the same, an ocean and a pool of water? 'Woe to thee, who equals the heads with the tails' (l. 8); 'Try to reach Canopus in the sky, if you attain it then you will overtake us' (l. 9); 'Are we not the ones who occupy the land of our enemy? Wait a little, inquire about us among the tribes' (l. 10).

Then follow lines that describe the tribe in pompous terms (11-17). Line 18 mentions the help they gave to the Prophet, and is very significant:

نَصَرْنَا وَأَوَيْنَا النَّبِيَّ وَصَدَّقْتْ أَوَائِلُنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَوَّلَ قَائِلٍ

'We supported the Prophet and gave him shelter, and the first of us believed the first one to proclaim the truth'.

So *أَوَائِل* is unmistakable, it always means the first or past ancestors, whereas *أَوَاخِر* means the later generations.

After this clear indication that those who 'believed and supported' were the earlier generations, the poet goes on, still using the first person, to state how they used to support the Prophet whenever he raided a tribe (l. 19). Then follows

<sup>4</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, I, 512, and the *Dīwān* of Qais b. al-Khaṭīm, ed. Nāṣir Eddīn el-Asad, Cairo, 1962, p. 34, where the rhyme-word is *الرَّكَائِب*. It is understandable that a versifier of a later generation may include such a line, intentionally or otherwise.

a short list of some of the battles. Line 20 evidently refers to the siege of Madīna :

وَيَوْمَ قَرِيشَ إِذْ أَتَوْنَا يَجْمَعُهُمْ  
وَطَنْنَا الْعَدُوَّ وَطَأَةً الْمُتَشَاوِلَ

‘ And on the day when the Quraish came to us with their host, we trod down the enemy with the tread of one who is walking deliberately ’.

The rhyme-word here is poor style, for usually *tathaḡal* implies reluctance. It is perhaps significant that the line is omitted from one of the older manuscripts.

Line 21 recalls Uḥud, and calls it ‘ a day disgracing to them ’ (i.e. to Quraish) which is the opposite of the fact. Later generations of ‘ days that have passed ’ in l. 2, and ‘ the name that has passed ’ in the second half of l. 3 only repeat the same idea.

Very significant, therefore, is the cry in l. 4 immediately following, ‘ Those are my people ’. This is a very clear instance of the detachment that the expression implies as well as of the recognition by the poet that his only firm ground for boasting is the glorious inheritance from ancestors who are already far removed from his own time.

Lines 5–10 are praise for his people, all in the third person plural, except for one instance (l. 8, second half) where it is obvious that the metre dictated the use of the first person plural. The qualities for which they are praised are all general abstractions : ‘ They beat with their good works the good works of all who have gone before ’ (l. 5), ‘ when they are approached in their assembly, they utter no insults, nor are they stingy towards those who ask for their favours ’ (l. 6), ‘ they fulfil what they undertake ’ (l. 7) ; ‘ Their “ neighbour ” is given high place among them, and so long as he stays with “ us ”, is honoured and hospitably treated ’ (l. 8) ; ‘ Their speaker is the first to declare the truth, their judgment is just, their pronouncement decisive ’ (l. 9) ; ‘ In peace and in war they are matchless. In war they infuse fear, in peace security ’ (l. 10).

The last line, 11, seems to jar with the general trend of the poem, for it is a sudden turn towards the first person singular, and an unexpected change of grounds for boasting : ‘ And of us are the trusted one of the Muslims, all his life, and the one whom the angels washed ’. Notes in the British Museum MS and other editions explain that the ‘ trusted one ’ is Sa’d b. Mu’ādh of the Aus, and the other is Ḥanzalah b. Abī ‘Āmir, also of the Aus, who fell at Uḥud. The Prophet is said to have told his relatives that the angels bathed him. The story (*Sīra*, 567–8) also states that when inquiries were made from his wife, she said that her husband had no time, in his hurry, for the ‘ major ablution ’, before rushing out to join the Muslims at the battle. The angels, however, performed it for him. Hence the reference in this line.

It is significant that both the men mentioned are Ausites. The line itself may well be a later addition to the poem, probably by an Ausite. It merely hangs on to the end of the poem without being part of it.

This is significant because it reveals a phase of the process by which these poems came to be attributed to Ḥassān. There is little doubt that the author



of the poem himself had no intention of disclaiming responsibility for it. It must have been fathered on Ḥassān at a later period, possible unintentionally. The last line, however, is clearly a deliberate addition. Such interpolations in genuine as well as attributed poems are found in the *Diwāns*.

Similar thoughts to those which begin this poem, couched partly in the same phrases, begin and end poem no. CLXVI. In the opening line the poet declares that God favoured them by making them the helpers of the Prophet, and in the final line he explains that if he boasted of them, it is because their past record deserves to be boasted of. In between he elaborates the boast of their relation to Islam, calls them the best of all creation, and praises them in exaggerated traditional terms.

Line 1 :

اللهُ أَكْرَمَنَا بِنَصْرِ نَبِيِّهِ وَبِنَا أَقَامَ دَعَائِمَ الْإِسْلَامِ

‘God favoured us by making us the supporters of His Prophet, and through us He established the foundations of Islam’.

‘Through us He gave power to His Prophet and His Book, and gave us power through fighting and courage’ (l. 2). ‘In every battle our swords cut off heads’ (l. 3). ‘Gabriel comes to us in our homes’ (l. 4). ‘In them he recites to us “the light”—a fortune indeed like no other!’ (l. 5). ‘Thus we would be the first to know what is lawful and unlawful’ (l. 6). ‘We are the best of all creation, and the controllers of everything’ (l. 7) ‘who do things through our power, and undo what others do’ (l. 8). Lines 10 and 11 exhort the hearer to ask various people about them. The poet then returns to direct boasting: ‘We protect whomever we choose to protect, and extend our favours generously’ (l. 12). ‘We repel the aggressive army, and break any hero’s pride’ (l. 13). ‘In every battle, we fought until we levelled the ground and filled it with lines of our horse’ (ll. 14–15).

In the final line, 16, the poet makes it clear that he is boasting of a remote heritage :

فَلَتَيْنِ فَخَرْتُ بِهِمْ لَمِثْلُ قَدِيمِهِمْ فَخَرَّ اللَّيْبُ بِهِ عَلَى الْأَقْوَامِ

‘Thus if I boast of them, a past such as theirs is one of which an intelligent person boasts’.

This and the looseness apparent in the structure of certain lines as well as the pompous and exaggerated terms of boasting make it certain that this is a poem by a member of the later generations of the Anṣār, during the Umayyad period. This is yet another poem which shows the development in their attitude to the coming of Islam and the part they played in establishing it. At first they claimed the credit and expected to reap the fruit. Now they claim it as a divine favour that they and no one else were allowed to give the Prophet support, and this privilege had come to be the watchword, and, apart from the traditional and common sentiments, almost the sole ground for their boasts. Everything else had been lost.

Finally it is to be noted that the *Lisān* <sup>5</sup> provides one extra line, before the final line, which is not found in the manuscripts <sup>6</sup>:

وَنَجَا أَرَاهُطُ أَبْعَطُوا وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ ثَبَتُوا لَمَا رَجَعُوا إِذَا بِسَلَامٍ

‘And certain people escaped, having run away, and had they stayed they would not have returned safely’.

This is clearly a reference to battles against the Qurashites, and most probably the poet had Badr in mind and the flight of al-Ḥārith b. Hishām, who left his brother on the battlefield. This impression the line gives of a particular incident being in the mind of the poet and the fact that the line does not exist in other sources seem strongly to suggest that it is an interpolation by an even later Anṣārī.

Of this group two poems remain, neither of which is found in the *Dīwāns*; one is ascribed by Ibn Hishām <sup>7</sup> to Ḥassān’s son, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān.

The first of these two poems <sup>8</sup> contains more than implicit evidence of later date in the first two lines, and the rest of the poem tells in a narrative form, of the reception the Madinese accorded the Prophet on his immigration, the help they gave him, and the victory at Badr. The boasting in the poem goes only so far. The poem opens:

قَوْمِي الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَوْوَا نَبِيَّهُمْ وَصَدَّقُوهُ وَأَهْلُ الْأَرْضِ كُفَّارُ  
إِلَّا خِصَائِصُ أَقْوَامٍ هُمْ سَلَفُ لِلصَّالِحِينَ مَعَ الْأَنْصَارِ أَنْصَارُ

‘My “people” are they who gave shelter to their Prophet, and believed in him when the rest of the world were unbelievers—except for choice men of certain peoples, who were predecessors of righteous men, and who were helpers with the Helpers’.

With this clear indication that the poet is consciously dealing with past history, one gets yet another example of the exact meaning of the word *qawmi* ‘the people from whom I am descended, my ancestors’.

The poem then goes on to tell of the attitude of the Anṣār to the Prophet on his arrival. They rejoiced at this fortune bestowed upon them by God, when the Prophet came to them (l. 3). They welcomed him (l. 4) and received him in their own land where he need have no fear (l. 5) and shared their wealth (l. 6).

Turning to the first person plural the poem now mentions and elaborates on the battle of Badr. ‘We marched to Badr and so did they, though had they known the truth [about its result] they would not have marched’ (l. 7). They were deceived into it (by Satan? or by Abū Jahl? it is not clear) and then left in the lurch (l. 8). They were promised protection and help by the same but were in fact brought to disgrace (l. 9). ‘We then met and they ran away in all directions leaving their chief men’ (l. 10).

<sup>5</sup> s.v. يعط.

<sup>6</sup> Barqūqī reproduces the line in his edition of the *Dīwān* p. 391, in the place indicated.

<sup>7</sup> *Sīra*, 929.

<sup>8</sup> *Sīra*, 474.

Thus it is all history, and part of the heritage. However, in addition to this and to the explicit evidence of the first two lines one would note that such sentiments as are found in ll. 3–4 cannot be Ḥassān's.

Lastly, one notices the general inferiority of this poem to Ḥassān's style, an inferiority which it shares with the rest of this group. On the whole the words are more commonplace, the lines are far less tight-packed and less terse. The poem contains also a number of instances where padding is clear, sometimes in the form of a parenthesis.

It is clear that this poem also is most probably the work of a descendant of the Anṣār, some generations after the time of Ḥassān and the events dealt with in the poem.

Finally in this group there is another poem which is found in the *Sīra* only.<sup>9</sup> Ibn Ishāq attributes the poem to Ḥassān, but Ibn Hishām states that it is attributed to his son, 'Abd al-Raḥmān.

This poem of 19 lines is a very good example, though an extreme one, of the tendency, no doubt of later date, to enumerate the deeds of the Anṣār or of the poet's ancestors—and the battles they fought. Apart from twice mentioning that they paid homage to the Prophet and remained loyal to him (l. 3 and l. 12) the poet lists no less than 11 battles and raids.

However, the explicit proof of a much later authorship than the time of Ḥassān occurs in l. 18, one line before the end :

أُولَئِكَ الْقَوْمُ أَنْصَارُ النَّبِيِّ وَهُمْ قَوْمِي أَصِيرُ إِلَيْهِمْ حِينَ أَتَّصِلُ

'Those people were the helpers of the Prophet, and they are my people ; to them I finally come when I relate my descent'.

Clearly, there is a wide gap of time between the poet and the people of whom he is boasting.

It has been pointed out that this group of poems has one important common factor, and that is the existence in each poem of explicit evidence of late authorship, in the form of lines or phrases which unmistakably show that the events of early Islam and the services the Madinese rendered to the Prophet are spoken of as past history and a heritage of a bygone age. This is in addition to other characteristics which point in the same direction. It will be useful, therefore, before proceeding to discuss poems that seem to be similarly of late date, but which do not contain this explicit evidence, to sum up the main traits of the group already discussed.

(1) Boasting is in general terms and is full of platitudes and abstractions.

(2) It is inclined to be pompous and sounds empty. One gets the impression that an effort is being made to build up an impressive position merely by means of big words, and to rely on the glories of the past.

(3) Most of the poems have a 'defensive' character and are indicative of a state of weakness. Effort is made to gain force by argument and some rhetoric.

<sup>9</sup> *Sīra*, 929.

(4) The boasting rests mainly on three bases: (i) the generalities already referred to; (ii) the past of the Madinese treated as history or presented as a heritage; (iii) the fertility and richness of their native town.

(5) The services of the Anṣār to the Prophet and Islam are treated as history—battles are often presented merely in a list, events are sometimes a little out of focus and some inaccuracies are found in historical data.

(6) These services of the Anṣār are presented more as a divine privilege bestowed upon them than as a positive and valuable contribution which is to their credit and which must be rewarded—as was the view of the Helpers themselves.

(7) Whenever the boasting is of the services of the Anṣār to Islam, the impression is nearly always gained that the poet cannot be identified with those who actually performed these services. He merely 'belongs' or is related to them. The word *qawmi* is particularly significant. Even when the first person plural is used one feels strongly that the identification is not complete, and the relation between poet and incidents is not personal.

(8) Sometimes the Prophet's connexion with the Anṣār is elaborated and is given a dramatic or a narrative form with pieces of dialogue put in the mouths of the Anṣār.

(9) The word 'Anṣār' comes to prominence instead of Khazraj or Aus, so also do certain terms such as المليك.

(10) The verse is on the whole inferior. The structure is not very firm. There is much padding, repetition, parenthesis, obscurity, and many constructions of doubtful validity.